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Priming and Perceptual Attitudes of Infidelity

Sean King, Damira Braderic and Misty White

Metropolitan State College of Denver

Research has indicated that subliminal priming may affect how dominant or passive a man will be sexually and women implicitly associate sex with submission under specific priming conditions (Kiefer & Sanchez, *Kalinka & Ybarra*, 2006; Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007). These findings suggest that men and women may implicitly associate sexual roles and subconscious environmental information which may guide the direction of sexual relationships. We argue that the schemas of sex and shame may influence perceptual attitudes of infidelity. Specifically, we assessed what types of relationship-related actions are perceived as acceptable or unacceptable in a variety of scenarios. Participants rated their own behaviors and the behaviors of a significant other while activating a set of beliefs centered around the schema of infidelity. We created the perception of two separate studies by using two different researchers, as it was important that the participants were not aware of the relationship between the priming session and the survey portion of the experiment. In the first experiment, participants were asked to express the cognitive relationship between words. Participants were shown a series of words (such as brain, emotion, dream) and then the priming word (sex, shame, or tree) for one minute given for encoding. After the encoding portion, the second researcher presented the relationship surveys: one rating self behavior and the other rating significant other behavior. The self behavior survey assessed the types of actions the participant perceived as acts of infidelity. The significant other survey involved questions focused on how accepting the participant would be seeing the significant other engaging in perceived acts of infidelity. Fourteen questions were asked, ranging from hugging and kissing to watching adult movies with another person. A 2 (gender) x 3 (prime type) x 2 (survey type) ANOVA found significance between the self vs. significant other conditions. Participants judged their own behavior as more acceptable than the perceived behaviors of their significant other. Significance was also found between genders on the

perception of infidelity since the men reported being more accepting seeing their significant other engage in perceived acts of infidelity than women. No significance was found between the types of priming words and the perception of infidelity. Future studies could include different sexual orientations in assessing the role of priming on the perception of infidelity.

References

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